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THE BASIC ISSUES IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH.
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FOUR PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS COLLABORATED IN 1958 TO ASSESS, CLARIFY, AND DEFINE THE TEACHING OF THE SUBJECT OF ENGLISH FROM KINDERGARTEN THROUGH GRADUATE SCHOOL. THEY PROPOSED 35 BASIC ISSUES IN THE FORM OF QUESTIONS TO BE RESOLVED BY THE ENGLISH TEACHING PROFESSION. TWENTY-ONE OF THE ISSUES REQUESTED AN EXAMINATION OF THE NATURE OF ENGLISH, ITS GOALS, CONTENT, AND TEACHING PROBLEMS, AND 14 QUESTIONED THE PREPARATION, CERTIFICATION, AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING OF ENGLISH TEACHERS ON THE ELEMENTARY, SECONDARY, AND COLLEGE LEVELS. THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR FINDING SOLUTIONS TO THE 35 QUESTIONS WAS ENTRUSTED TO INDIVIDUAL TEACHERS, ENGLISH DEPARTMENTS, NATIONAL PROFESSIOANL ORGANIZATIONS, AND SPONSORING FOUNDATIONS. IT WAS GENERALLY BELIEVED THAT SUCCESS IN SOLVING THESE 35 PROBLEMS WOULD EFFECT A SEQUENTIAL AND CUMULATIVE ENGLISH CURRICULUM, EMBRACING BOTH PRACTICAL AND HUMAN VALUES. (THIS SUPPLEMENT TO "ELEMENTARY ENGLISH," OCTOBER 1959, IS ALSO AVAILABLE FROM THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH, 508 SOUTH SIXTH STREET, CHAMPAIGN, ILL. 61820, STOCK NO. 00509, $0.25.) (JB)

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The Basic Issues in the Teaching of English

Being

DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

Presented by Members of the

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COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION, AND

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

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Preface

From the time he enters the first grade until he is at least part way through college, the American student finds himself studying something called "English." He is required to take more years of it, by far, than of any other subject. If, anywhere along this educational scale, he is asked what he is studying, the answer is most likely to be: English—and Subject x and Subject y and Subject z.

Why is this so? What makes "English" so important that it alone is considered indispensable for every one of the first twelve or thirteen years of a child's formal education? English is the native language; one learns to speak it at home. But reading it and writing it *well* are complex processes; proficiency in them requires years of instruction and practice. Our culture is highly verbal. Many of the occupations which we reward most liberally by prestige and money are those in which the ability to use written and spoken language effectively and to understand difficult reading matter is essential.

The first reason for studying English, then, is *its practical value.* Skills acquired in reading and writing are basic to most other subjects studied in school and college and are useful, if not vital, in later life. Verbal skill is so closely linked with success in studies other than English that many liberal arts colleges find the best predictor of general academic success, aside from a good high school record in a good school, is a test of the College Entrance Examination Board called the "Verbal Aptitude Test."

But English is not merely a group of skills which underlie other subjects; it also has a subject matter of its own. That subject matter is the cultural heritage, in literary form, of the English-speaking people. Our cultural heritage is very broad: it is religious, technological, political, sociological, and artistic. Probably the part of it that is both broadest in scope and most readily available to everyone who has acquired a general education is the literary part. Works of imaginative literature concern themselves with men *as men,* not merely as craftsmen or voters or members of a social group or wielders of power. The literary tradition represents what man has done; it records what he has dreamed and felt and thought—not only in the past, but in the present also. A literary work does not have to wait for years to dignify it; if it is good enough it takes its place the day it is published in the company of its great predecessors.

To put it in other terms, we study literature to learn from it. What we learn is a great deal about people and things which cannot be learned in other ways. The reader of literature gets from it a vicarious experience which is of the first importance in teaching him something of his identity as a human being, in terms of the ties that bind him to the rest of mankind, as well as something of his identity as an individual.

So this literary part of our cultural heritage is rich in the past and alive in the present. Ignorance of it would leave one a barbarian, in the sense that he would have no real connection with the culture of the past which produced him, or with the deep and significant currents of feeling and thought in his own time. Thus the second reason for studying English is its *civilizing value.*

Those people who get the most out of literature would not be satisfied with these two reasons, however. They might say that these are as peripheral as two reasons a man might give for getting married: to have somebody to keep house for him and to have someone conveniently at hand to escort on social occasions where his attendance alone would be awkward. The best reason a man can give for getting married is that he has fallen deeply and permanently in love. And so with English; it is a subject which can involve very deep and permanent feeling.

Literature is an art, but unlike the other fine arts—music, painting, sculpture, and architecture—the medium is one which we all use every day. Words are capable of the most tawdry uses, but also the most sublime. And even a person whose language seldom moves above the commonplace is employing the same medium which Shakespeare used. Shakespeare's (or any great artist's) use of this medium, however, is characterized by form, by an aesthetic quality which produces pleasure, one which differentiates such writing from the commonplace and ordinary. Thus, of all the arts, the most accessible would seem to be the literature written in one's own language. The third and best reason for studying English, then, is *for the love of it.*

More than any other subject, English offers

the possibility of self-education and development outside the classroom and beyond the years of formal schooling. The materials for a good liberal education are to be found in the paperback books, now available at newsstands everywhere in the country. But to profit from this opportunity, the habit of reading and a love of good literature are necessary.

When we proceed to look at the present state of English in the United States, from the kindergarten through the graduate school, we find that the many years of exposure to the subject and the good and simple reasons for studying it seldom combine to form a satisfying picture. Some hostile critics have said that if as much student time were spent on any other subject with so little in the way of results, it would be a national scandal. Defenders would reply that English is extremely broad and general, the results are not easy to measure, and the efficacy of English teaching should not be judged by its poorest products. So long as it is required of everyone, students who have the least aptitude for it are not going to look very impressive.

But the profession itself is expressing real concern about the *quality* of the work in English. There are also divisions of opinion within the profession as to the causes and the remedies of the faults we recognize. These divisions, if sharpened into basic issues, might lead to a critical re-examination of the whole field and possible solutions of far-reaching importance. There is as much reason to believe that English teaching can be radically improved, given the right approaches to the problems and an effort of sufficient magnitude and strength, as there is to suppose that we can strengthen education in mathematics, science, and foreign languages.

We are in the midst of what some people call a "communications revolution." This means more than saying, whether justifiably or not, that Johnny looks at television instead of reading books. It means that mass media of all sorts —picture magazines, radio, television, recordings, films, and the like—have significantly affected the environment in which young people learn to read and write. Some adaptation of these media to the teaching of English has of course been made, but whether too much or too little of the right kind or the wrong kind remains far from clear. The power of mass media, frightening to some people, has led to courses which emphasize propaganda analysis, general semantics, and other means of resistance to "pressure communications." The invention of computers and machines which some day may be able to translate from one language to another has led some teachers (and students) to scurry off to mathematics and the strange new world of "Information Theory." How long ago was it that shorthand and the dictaphone bred the notion that only secretaries needed to know how to spell?

Meanwhile everybody, including English teachers, complain that students do not know how to read or write. Those outside the profession are apt to be particularly bitter about it. They insist, at the college level, on requiring of all students a course in Freshman English, sometimes now called "Communication(s)." Such a course is supposed to solve the problem, but unfortunately it doesn't. The English Department often resents having to give a service course for the entire college or university, and composition teachers frequently protest that this kind of work carries little chance for development, promotion, and professional prestige. Besides, basic training in fundamentals belongs in high school, not in college. But if it has to be given in college, why isn't it the responsibility of *everybody* on the faculty—in history, sociology, chemistry, or whatever—to see that his students write well? So goes the argument.

The high school English teacher is equally troubled. He points out that in many schools English is now combined with social studies in some kind of block or core course, and that, as the only required course, it suffers intrusions from everything in the school which applies to all students—extracurricular activities, safety programs, patriotic exercises, and Red Cross drives. Furthermore, the average high school teacher's work load is such that his time for thoughtful reading and constructive criticism of student compositions is severely curtailed.

These descriptions may seem heightened and overpessimistic. In many schools and colleges, no doubt, they would not apply. But with the proper qualifications, they may be taken as illustrative of some of the problems, at some levels, in the teaching of English today. It would not be difficult to find illustrations of equally serious difficulties in the elementary grades and in the graduate school.

Are we teaching English in such a way that it truly has a civilizing value, or have we watered down the subject so much, in an attempt to fit it to the supposed interests of the many whom we teach, that we have deprived them of the opportunity to become acquainted with and

to experience the best thought and expression of their own time and the cultural heritage which is rightfully theirs? This is a vexing question, and most English teachers have at one time or another asked it of themselves.

A still graver question is whether we have succeeded in inculcating in our students a permanent love of good literature and a pride in the ability to use their language with clarity and grace. All teaching is, of course, an act of faith, but it sometimes requires very strong faith indeed to believe that we are achieving our goal in this respect.

Some of us in the profession[1] believe that a thorough re-examination of the whole problem of the teaching of English, from the elementary grades through the graduate school, is now imperative. We think that as an initial step we need a clear formulation of the *Basic Issues* which confront us. We have undertaken to prepare this formulation, and we present it herewith. It should be understood that we have found among ourselves a great deal of agreement about the teaching of English, and this agreement does not usually appear in our statements of the Basic Issues, because obviously issues are more clearly apparent where disagreement occurs. We are talking, moreover, about Basic Issues, not about problems which would arise in reaching a solution if we had agreed upon what the solution should be. Two kinds of issues emerge, those *within* the profession and those *between* the profession and other interested parties, including the general public.

We present these issues in no partisan, doctrinaire, or contentious spirit; we have no enemy but ignorance. Our only vested interest is the development of an increasingly higher degree of literacy in young American citizens. We think the matter is urgent; we hope that the profession will see these issues as basic and will expeditiously find solutions for the problems arising from them. We are confident that success in this endeavor will bring about an education in English which is sequential and cumulative in nature, practically and socially useful, and permanently rewarding to the mind and spirit of those who are fortunate enough to get it.

[1] The members of this group are twenty-eight teachers of English, meeting under the auspices of the American Studies Association, the College English Association, the Modern Language Association of America, and the National Council of Teachers of English. Three three-day conferences were held during 1958: on 27–29 January, 11–13 April, and 16–18 June. A final meeting on 19 October considered a preliminary draft of this report. The whole enterprise has been supported by a grant from the Ford Foundation. The members of the committee will be found listed in the Appendix.

Basic Issues

GOALS, CONTENT, AND TEACHING PROBLEMS

1. *What is "English"?* We agree generally that English composition, language, and literature are within our province, but we are uncertain whether our boundaries should include world literature in translation, public speaking, journalism, listening, remedial reading, and general academic orientation. Some of these activities admittedly promote the social development of the individual. But does excessive emphasis on them result in the neglect of that great body of literature which can point the individual's development in more significant directions? Has the fundamental liberal discipline of English been replaced, at some levels of schooling, by *ad hoc* training in how to write a letter, how to give a radio speech, manners, dating, telephoning, vocational guidance?

2. *Can basic programs in English be devised that are sequential and cumulative from the kindergarten through the graduate school?* Can agreement be reached upon a body of knowledge and set of skills as standard at certain points in the curriculum, making due allowances for flexibility of planning, individual differences, and patterns of growth? This issue seems crucial to this entire document and to any serious approach to the problem. Unless we can find an answer to it, we must resign ourselves to an unhappy future in which the present curricular disorder persists and the whole liberal discipline of English continues to disintegrate and lose its character. Within this basic issue are such sub-issues as: What assumptions, if any, should the teacher *at any level* be able to make about the training his students have received at lower levels? How much responsibility does the teacher at any level have to prepare his students for the next higher level? Who sees to it that the work in elementary school is related to that in secondary school, the work on the secondary school level to that of the elementary school and of college, the work in college to that of the high school and the graduate school?

3. *Should certain literary works be required at each of the various levels in a basic program?* Can we ever say that *this* person should read *this* book at *this particular* stage of his life? If not, what happens to the great ideas and great works which constitute our cultural tradition? This issue raises the question of whether or not all students should have some literary experiences in common. Accordingly, the issue could be stated differently: Should certain authors (if not specific works) be required at each level, or should the study of particular genres or literary types be established for each level?

4. *What approaches to a literary work are possible and profitable at the various educational levels?* It is often observed that many English teachers, at levels other than the elementary school, use the same approach: a loose combination of the biographical, the analytic, and the didactic. Assuming that we have good or superior students, when is it most appropriate to practice rigorous textual analysis? To employ the historical and sociological approach? To relate the work to the history of ideas?

If these things cannot all be done at once, in what order should they be done? Which approach should be emphasized at each of the educational levels? Is there also a sequence within each of these approaches? If one of these approaches seems desirable at a given level for the superior student, can it be modified so as to be of value to the less gifted student also?

5. *In what stages should the student acquire a vocabulary of technical terms and a knowledge of critical concepts necessary to talk and write intelligently about literature?* Every discipline has its special vocabulary, but at present the English teacher in high school or college usually finds he cannot take for granted that his students have already learned even the simpler terms and concepts, though the students have been "taking English" for years. A tenth-grade student will almost certainly know the basic concepts and operational methods of algebra, but where in school or college would the teacher know that his students already understand the meaning of such terms as narrative point of view, blank verse, irony, and poetic justice?

6. *At what levels is coverage of the field important?* There seems to be no disagreement over the proposition that it is part of the function of the English teacher at all levels to enable students to read literary works with understanding and appreciation. Considerable disagreement appears, however, as to whether there should be a minimum amount of literature to be "covered" at any stage, and if so, what constitutes that minimum. Should a sequential and cumulative program specify for each level those authors and works which are too important to be omitted? At what stage should the student have acquired a clear sense of the chronological development and continuity of English and American literature? Coverage, though variously defined, is usually expected of the Ph.D. candidate, but divergence widens toward chaos as we proceed downward to the requirements for the M.A., the college English major, the student in a required college English course, and the high school graduate.

7. *How is the student to acquire the requisite knowledge about subjects necessary for the understanding and enjoyment of literature?* Poets, novelists, and playwrights have drawn upon a wide range of mythology, Biblical passages, and historical events which are often unfamiliar to the modern student in school or college, but cumulatively significant for an understanding of Western culture. How can the student be given or get this background? Are there alternatives to the heavily annotated texts which must be read slowly? What are the possibilities of short courses in classical, Biblical, and English backgrounds, and what are the appropriate levels for them? Could such courses be made valuable in themselves and not remain mere preparation for something?

8. *Can reliable and valid tests be devised for the various levels of a basic program in English?* Most existing tests attempt to measure English skills but are not precise about the content of a student's knowledge. Could tests be devised which would help to define the sequential and cumulative nature of a basic English program? Would such tests, administered nationally, tend to raise the general level of achievement in English? At what levels should such tests be given? If they are given, will English assume the nature of a "cram course"? Can tests be devised which measure reliably skill *and* knowledge, and even attitudes?

9. *How should the basic program in English be modified for the less able student?* The preceding issues point toward a program from junior high school through the sophomore year in college, which might attract the enthusiastic support of the profession if all the students were what we call "good" or "superior." For them, some such basic program might produce a steadily increasing competence in writing and an understanding and delight in literature. But unfortunately not all students are "good" or "superior." Teachers point out that individual differences in English ability are very marked, from the earliest grades on up. Can these individual differences be productively nurtured? It is sometimes charged that a distorted concern over individual differences in reading ability has brought all members of a class down to the level of the mediocre student instead of challenging each learner to his utmost. Is some kind of "remedial reading" for the weaker students the answer? Or "enrichment" for the better students? Is homogeneous grouping desirable at any or all levels? If it is, how should this grouping be done? If it is not, what allowances for individual variation should be made?

10. *Should the basic program in English be modified for students who are primarily interested in science, technology, or related fields?* This issue concerns those students who may have very great ability but whose interests and educational programs lead them toward technical subjects. Should they be grouped together for their study of English? Should they undertake the regular basic programs as a liberal humanistic discipline or should they study material which is closer to their presumed interests? Should their assigned reading emphasize the prose of ideas and processes to the exclusion of *belles lettres*? Should they be trained to write functional, practical compositions and leave to others the freer and more imaginative kinds of writing? Has the profession any obligation to educate these increasingly important members of our younger generation in critical evaluation, aesthetic responsiveness, and imagination? If so, how can this best be done?

11. *Is teaching the reading of factual prose as much an obligation of the English teacher as training in the careful reading of literature?* Teachers of almost all subjects in school and college teach reading of some kind.

Yet "reading" per se is supposed to be the responsibility of the English teacher. Should this responsibility include the teaching of how to read textbooks in other courses? Newspapers? Advertisements? Propaganda? Various kinds of periodicals? If the answer to these questions is in the affirmative, English then becomes a service program for other disciplines. Should it?

12. *How should writing be taught?* We have seen no reliable evidence that students are writing less well than comparable students wrote twenty, forty, or a hundred years ago. Nevertheless, few are satisfied with the present quality of student writing, and there is little agreement on how to attack this problem.

Of what skills is the practical art of writing composed? Which of them can be taught most easily and most effectively at what levels? Can the teaching of these skills be distributed among the various educational levels in such a way that learning to write well becomes a purposeful, satisfying, sequential, and cumulative experience for the student?

Should students be taught to "express themselves" or to "communicate"? Should their writing assignments be related to their reading, to their direct experience, or to both? How can both imaginative and factual writing be given their just share of emphasis? Should the writing exercises be closely linked to formal study of grammar and rhetoric? Is learning to write primarily a matter of learning to think? This issue bristles with difficulties.

13. *What kind of knowledge should the student have about the structure of the English language, and how can such knowledge, at various levels, be used to improve his ability to write well?* A knowledge of traditional English grammar is sometimes considered an intellectual discipline and a social necessity. Accordingly, over the past century, grammar has been taught in thousands of classrooms, but with little apparent effect upon the written or spoken language of many pupils. Perhaps it was naive to expect it, in terms of what we know today about the language learning process; but in any event, new approaches to this problem may be worth considering.

The descriptive linguists offer one such possibility. In place of the schoolbook grammar of past generations, quite adequate for describing Latin and Greek but not so adaptable to an analysis of English, they provide a descriptive technique which attempts to achieve scientific rigor and precision by concentrating upon the contrastive patterns of form and arrangement characteristic of the structure of the language. This is in contrast to the preoccupation with meaning typical of the early grammarians. Only *after* the patterns of the language have been adequately described does the linguist seek to attach meaning to them.

Up to the present only a few textbooks have attempted to adapt the approach of the structural linguists to use in the classroom. Nevertheless, we must ask whether this new method offers a clue to a better correlation of the knowledge of language structure with writing ability. How much, if any, of such linguistic knowledge is appropriate for each level? How may teachers best be trained to develop this knowledge in their pupils? What difficulties arise with respect to a transition from the conventional approach to grammar to the newer methods of studying language structure? What special problems are involved in applying this new way to the development of the various language skills?

14. *What is the relation between learning to write and the reading of imaginative literature?* Although good writers are usually discriminating and sensitive readers, not all good readers write well. Some courses, and even some college departments, separate composition and literature from each other. Does the ability to write well come largely from exercises which reflect the student's own practical needs? And does too great dependence upon literary models produce an affected or too imitative style in student writers? Conversely, how can a student ever acquire a sensitiveness to language without studying literary works which illustrate such sensitiveness? Does the common course which includes both literature and composition tend to neglect one in favor of the other? If so, is this because we know too little about the relationship between them?

15. *Could national standards for student writing at the various levels be established, and what would be their value?* The evaluation of student writing is difficult. Some overworked teachers mark only mechanical and grammatical errors, leaving the students with the impression that learning to write well is a negative matter—the avoidance of such errors. Others go too far in the other direction and grade very subjectively, leaving the student

with the impression that the art of writing well is merely the knack of appealing to the tastes and whims of his particular teacher. Can norms or standards for the various levels be established—standards which are fairly objective but not merely mechanical? Would such norms exert an influence toward imitation and mediocrity? Would such standards be helpful to the teacher? To the student? Would they help solve problems of teaching or simply apply another type of pressure?

16. *What is the responsibility of the English teacher for the student's ability to express himself orally?* At the elementary level, speaking and writing (and, in fact, listening) are commonly taught together as constituent parts of English. The recent development of "Communication" courses in college reasserts the connection at a higher level. Sometimes, however, "Speech" and "English" are grouped in separate departments, with the implication that oral expression is no closer to English than it is to foreign languages or social studies or philosophy; in other schools English teachers who have had no special training in speech are assigned to teach courses in which speaking and listening (considered as a special language activity) occupy as much time as reading. What place should speech, oral interpretation of literature, and training in listening have in the English curriculum? At what levels?

17. *What effect does class size have upon the quality of the training in reading and writing?* It is generally assumed that small classes (twenty-five or less) are better than large ones (thirty-five or more). We have no clear proof of this assumption, but many teachers are convinced of its truth. In a time of teacher shortage and swollen student enrollment, English classes are often larger than those in other subjects because English is the subject most often required. Therefore this issue, which is important in education generally, has special significance in English. The general question may be broken down into parts: Is the small class more desirable in composition than in literature? Is the small class more necessary for poor students than for the superior? Can literature be taught as successfully, in the colleges or possibly even in the secondary schools, by a combination of large lectures and small discussion groups as by the conventional class method? Is the small class more desirable at one level than another? What seems to be the optimum class size for the teaching of composition? Of literature? Of a combination of the two? Does the new teacher need a smaller class than the more experienced?

18. *What effect does the teacher's work load have on the quality of the student's achievement in English?* Related to class size, but not identical with it, is the amount of available time the teacher has per student in all classes he teaches. To what degree does the assigned amount of writing depend upon the time the teacher has to read student papers and criticize them constructively? To what extent is the student's progress in learning to write retarded by the English teacher's lack of sufficient time to criticize his papers and to confer with him effectively and profitably? Are there ways in which the teacher's time for work on papers could be increased without augmenting his total work load?

19. *What are the potential contributions of modern technology to the teaching of English?* What audio-visual aids such as records, tapes, films, opaque projectors, radio, and television are especially useful to the English teacher? Which of them are valuable for the teaching of composition, and at what levels? For the teaching of literature? Does the "Skinner Box" offer possibilities in the teaching of any part of English? What risks, if any, are there in substituting new devices for those oldest of audio-visual tools, the book and the human voice?

20. *How can English teachers enlist the aid of other teachers, administrators, members of boards of education, and the public at large, to make the English program as effective as possible?* The purposes and methods of the study of English are often vague or misunderstood in the minds of people outside the field. (Sometimes, to our dismay, they seem to think we are chiefly concerned with polite usage and spelling.) Part of the cause may be lack of clarity within the profession itself. But it would seem that a subject which is at once so practical and so broadly human in its appeal should be capable of attracting the interest and support of anyone friendly to education at any level. Do we need clearer lines of responsibility within the whole curriculum? Can the English profession define its function narrowly enough to promise

a really good job of what it tries to do, yet broadly enough to encourage the most fruitful cooperation with other studies and with the whole educational enterprise? How can we translate these important issues, and the answers we hope to find to them, into terms which are meaningful to our society?

21. *Can the requirements for the Ph.D. degree in English be clarified and standardized?* If the basic program in English is to be sequential and cumulative, presumably the requirements for the highest degree in the field should be clearly understood. At present there is great variety, much of it healthy, among American graduate schools in English. The introduction of the "New Criticism," "Humanities," structural linguistics, and programs in American Studies has changed the advanced study of English markedly during the past thirty years. The change may have been for the better, but it has also produced some confusion and uncertainty about standards. Is it time for a restatement of the goals of the Ph.D. program, including the kind of person it is intended to produce, as well as the standards in coverage of the field, requirements in linguistics, acceptable kinds of dissertations, and especially the minimum and maximum time allowed for the completion of work for the degree?

PREPARATION AND CERTIFICATION OF TEACHERS

ELEMENTARY LEVEL

22. *How much and what kind of training in English should the elementary school teacher have?* Often the elementary teacher has had no course in English other than Freshman Composition and possibly a survey course. Is this enough? Should he be expected to spend some specific fraction of his college program in English courses? What levels of competence might be defined for him? What subjects are essential? Should he have more training in writing? Should he have a course in children's literature?

23. *What skills should an elementary school teacher have in order to develop eagerness in pupils to learn to read and write well?* The child's environment outside of school seems now to be less favorable to the development of a love of reading and a desire to write well than it used to be. How can the teacher, the school program, and the school library most effectively stimulate the student's interest? How can the teacher-in-training acquire the necessary skills?

24. *How much of the teacher's training should be in education courses and how much in courses primarily devoted to language and literature?* This issue is not peculiar to the subject of English, of course, and it applies to the secondary level as well as to the elementary. But the elementary teacher is the least specialized of all teachers; he quite naturally focuses his attention more upon the child than upon any one of the several subjects he teaches him. Consequently he must study child development and have various kinds of laboratory or practice-teaching experiences to train him in dealing with children. Does his training teach him enough about children's capacities for learning to read and write well? What are the most productive kinds of study in English for the prospective elementary teacher?

SECONDARY LEVEL

25. *Ideally, how much college study of language and literature is desirable for the secondary school teacher?* English teachers should know their English. But their teaching of English is likely to be sounder if they also know at least one foreign language, other humanities, something of the social sciences and natural sciences. Should courses in language and literature occupy, say, one fourth to one third of the college curriculum of the future secondary school teacher? What gaps are there in the preparation of the English teacher at this level? What parts, if any, of his present training, both academic and professional, have little value for him?

26. *What standard qualifications in English can be established for secondary school English teachers?* In many communities some teachers with only a weak minor or even less training in English are assigned classes in English. Their performance as teachers may be poor because of insufficient knowledge of language and literature. Some standards should be available to guide school administrators and principals, and to enable the public to judge the quality of the schools it pays for. That a large professional group can actually agree upon a clear statement of such standards has recently been demonstrated by the teachers of modern

foreign languages. What should be the standard qualifications in English?

27. *What is the responsibility of liberal arts colleges in the preparation of effective teachers of English?* What provisions can be made for supplementing the knowledge of liberal arts graduates and for giving appropriate laboratory experience, in order to equip them for secondary teaching in minimum time? Contrary to the general impression, most secondary school teachers come from liberal arts colleges and universities; only a small proportion come from teachers colleges, which generally concentrate upon preparing elementary teachers. Yet the liberal arts college frequently recognizes little or no responsibility on its part to qualify its students to teach. More exploration is needed into what kinds of courses would increase the student's command of English language and literature and at the same time count as educational training of value toward certification. What are the possibilities of spreading to the rest of the country such programs as the Master of Arts in Teaching at Harvard and Yale? Or such well-established fifth-year programs as are found in some states where a master's degree or equivalent is required of secondary teachers? Or the three-summer teacher-training program of the State of New York?

28. *What kind of training in teaching methods does the future secondary school English teacher need?* It seems clear that the teacher should know how to stimulate and satisfy the intellectual curiosity of the adolescent, but the pedagogical methods by which this is done are not so clear. What part of pedagogical training focuses on developing the habit of reading and fostering a love of literature? How much is known about this subject? It seems evident that much closer cooperation between Departments of English and Departments of Education is necessary if this issue is to be resolved.

29. *How can the Master of Arts degree be made more effective in the preparation of secondary school teachers?* This issue refers to the Master of Arts in the regular graduate department of English. This degree might serve well the needs of the secondary school teacher of English except for the fact that he is sometimes excluded from taking it because of inadequate undergraduate preparation in English and so takes his master's degree in Education, sometimes with adequate provision for content courses in English and sometimes without. The ambiguous M.A. in English is sometimes considered a baby Ph.D. degree, sometimes a consolation prize for those who cannot achieve the doctorate. Thoughtful reconsideration of the purposes and content of the M.A. program might make this degree much more serviceable for the secondary teacher and contribute significantly to the whole sequential and cumulative nature of the ideal English curriculum.

COLLEGE LEVEL

30. *How much graduate training in writing, rhetoric, criticism, linguistics, and the history of the language is desirable for the prospective college teacher?* It appears that our teaching-assistant graduate students and young Ph.D.s may expect ninety per cent of their first six years of teaching to be in freshman and sophomore composition. Yet the typical Ph.D. program is almost completely void of courses dealing primarily with language and rhetoric. Is it right to assume that a beginning teacher can teach well something he has not studied directly since he was an undergraduate, something that is at best peripheral to his own current training and interests?

31. *What preparation for college teaching should the Ph.D. candidate receive?* Does he need to know *how* to teach? Can he acquire this knowledge by taking courses in how to teach his subject? How much use is he required to make of his observation of teaching methods in graduate school? What opportunities is he given, in seminars and elsewhere, to practice the art of teaching? How much useful criticism of himself as a teacher does he get in graduate school? Is a graduate school justified in training its students as scholars only and then recommending them to the colleges as teachers?

32. *Can the teaching of composition be raised to the same level of academic respectability as the teaching of literature?* The teaching of composition is regarded as drudgery, is paid badly, and offers little opportunity for advancement in rank. Typically it is thought to be only a steppingstone to the teaching of literature. Teachers who share this attitude are not likely to inspire a love of English in their students. The morale of the freshman course is one of the most complex and important issues which confronts the profession.

GENERAL

33. *How can we achieve articulation of teaching and teacher training at all levels in English?* If the English program is to become ideally sequential and cumulative, there must be much closer communication and cooperation among the teachers at the various levels. Some states and some national organizations have made efforts toward better articulation in recent years, but much more remains to be done. The atmosphere of mutual cordiality at the Bowling Green Conference in 1958 and the success of recent conferences of high school and college English teachers under the auspices of the Advanced Placement Program are encouraging signs that a greater degree of articulation can be attained.

34. *How can opportunities be made for continued education and intellectual growth for English teachers on all levels?* Because English is a subject which requires personal involvement, the intellectual liveliness and interest of the teacher are likely to be reflected in the student. Yet many English teachers have such heavy teaching loads and supervisory duties that they cannot find the time for reading, writing, playgoing, and studying that would keep them alive and growing. Would fellowships, travel grants, summer workshops, and conferences remedy this situation?

35. *Is there a special need in the English profession for a degree intermediate between the master's and the doctor's degree?* What is sometimes called "the tyranny of the Ph.D. degree" afflicts English as it does other subjects. Would the creation of a degree lower than the Ph.D. but higher than the M.A. (called possibly the Ph.M.) have advantages? Would the existence of such a degree decrease the current pressures to lower the standards for the Ph.D.? Would it meet the needs of those who want a comprehensive and thorough graduate training but are not preparing for a research career? Would it solve the problem of those who finish all the course work for the Ph.D. and then spend years on a dissertation in which they have lost interest? Could such an intermediate degree gain academic acceptance and respectability?

Conclusion

The constructive program that needs to be developed from these Basic Issues: It is our considered judgment that these issues and the problems arising from them are the urgent concern of the whole profession, now and in the future. There may be additional ones, some so general that they apply to many fields besides English, others so particular that they may be important at one level but not, perhaps, basic to a whole sequential and cumulative program. We believe that the logical and educational relationship among these issues is evident, and that the order in which they are presented has meaning. Some of the issues seem harder to resolve than others, but in our opinion a comprehensive solution is possible. We have not selected a small number of issues as the "most important"; to do so would run contrary to our conviction that a broad attack upon the whole problem of the teaching of English from the kindergarten through the graduate school is essential. Such an approach offers the only hope of achieving a truly sequential and cumulative program in English.

In considering such an approach, it is incumbent upon us to attempt to define the areas of responsibility. In any such effort as this, there are necessarily appropriate spheres of operation for the individual teacher, for English departments, for the professional organizations, and indeed for foundations in a position to extend their support.

What the individual teacher can do: The individual teacher, of course, in any curriculum is the real key to student development. However well designed a curriculum may be, however ideal its goals, it will succeed only through the individual teacher. Accordingly, in the light of these thirty-five Basic Issues and of the general aims of education in English on which we agree, it becomes apparent that the individual teacher needs to inform himself as well as possible about the work in English at other levels, particularly those adjacent to his teaching responsibilities.

He should have a clear and unprejudiced idea of what the student already knows and what proficiency he has developed up to that point in his education. And he should have an equally clear idea of what will follow at the next higher level. The individual teacher is also responsible for making the student conscious of what the study of English really is. No doubt many different ways exist of phrasing and illustrating the nature of the study of English, but unless the student is clear as to what he is doing and why, he is not likely to put his heart into it. The successful teaching of English *involves* the student; it engenders and encourages in him that interest which lasts beyond the classroom and the assignment. Since the only teachers who can produce this effect are those who are themselves growing, personally and intellectually, it behooves the individual teacher to take thought about his own development as well as that of his students and to recognize that he is a member of a profession possessing clearly defined goals.

What English Departments can do: The individual teacher is very important, but his English Department, in school or college, his administrators and supervisors, have responsibilities too. They must recognize and cope with the fact that English teachers, by and large, are individualists. The departmental administrators should, of course, respect and utilize these individual differences. But they should also insist that the English program transcends the individuals who make up the department. They should, as far as possible, draw clear lines of responsibility in the field. They should also devise better means of measuring departmental efforts, so that the attitude in the department or supervisory group is neither cynical nor smug but cordial to realistic, repeated appraisals of the work done. Finally, the departmental authorities or supervisors must accept the responsibility to foster by all means available the opportunity for growth among its members.

What the professional organizations can do: Professional organizations, for example the four which are united now for the first time in this effort to define Basic Issues, provide the individual teacher with a context larger than that of his own department and his own institution. Because they are national, they offer an educational context wider than a state or region. The annual meetings of these organizations stimulate intellectual and pedagogical discussion. The books and journals published by them are of major concern to the intellectual and pedagogi-

cal interests of the members. These publications provide a "voice" for the profession, or for some part of it. The professional societies keep an eye on standards, though they have, of course, no machinery for actually requiring that standards be met. They tend not to impose their professional point of view as strongly as, say, the American Medical Association or the American Bar Association, but they do provide the profession with what unity it has. Occasionally an organization has been able, by means of sustained effort and sufficient financial support, to effect a real reform in American education. The remarkable results of the Foreign Language Program of the Modern Language Association constitute a recent example. It is in the professional societies that one would naturally look for the leadership required for any major effort, national in scope. And the structure of the organizations makes it possible for the whole membership to be kept informed and stimulated to participate in the achievement of a large enterprise. The close collaboration of the four national organizations of English teachers, which has already occurred in the formulation of these Basic Issues, would seem to afford a unique opportunity for the launching of a program which covers the whole of English teaching and which will involve the active participation of teachers from the most elementary level to the most advanced.

What foundation support can do: English teaching is a part of the educational system of this country, undramatized to date by the scientific and political crises which have aroused the interest and concern of the public. It is still, however, the longest and most continuous of the student's educational experiences. Because it has been neglected and because of its comprehensive nature, English offers a great opportunity for foundation support to exert an effective and pervasive influence upon American education. The first thing a foundation can do is to provide the opportunity for doing something beyond what the professional organizations, English Departments, and individual teachers are now able to accomplish. State systems, professional organizations, and other bodies are not able to set into motion well-articulated programs of the kind required. Professional organizations, whose funds are derived from membership dues, lack the resources necessary to support pilot experiments. The societies can find the people best qualified to staff such programs, but cannot supply the funds necessary to release them from their normal teaching duties. State educational systems, now struggling with problems of rapidly increasing enrollments and inadequate facilities, are likewise unable to assume this responsibility. What is needed is financial support for several large articulated programs, with suitable means of testing and evaluating achievement at the various levels and facilities for disseminating the findings throughout the profession. Only in this way can a sound program in English, sequential and cumulative from kindergarten through graduate school, be developed.

We are convinced that despite the pressure of rapidly increasing enrollments in our educational system, quality must still be our highest concern. We believe that there is an opportunity for the achievement of higher quality in the teaching of English, articulated at all levels. We think that this opportunity, if it is seized, will have a profound and lasting effect upon English teachers, upon the students they teach, and finally upon our whole educational system.

Appendix

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